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CALFED ANNOUNCES MORE THAN \$100 MILLION
IN ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECTS

SACRAMENTO--Today the CALFED Bay-Delta Program announced more than \$100 million in funding for 50 ecosystem restoration projects selected within the Bay-Delta system, the first awards using approximately \$60 million in a combination of Proposition 204, federal and stakeholder funds, with more than \$40 million in cost sharing. The projects are geared towards restoring and improving habitat for California's fish, birds and native plants.

"I am pleased to announce that the prognosis is good for improving the ecological health of the Bay-Delta system," said CALFED Executive Director Lester Snow. "These projects represent a partial prescription for ecosystem restoration that is good medicine for California's native wildlife and for the economy, as the Bay-Delta is an extremely valuable natural resource."

About three-fourths of the money will be devoted to projects that restore rivers and the riparian forests along them, and for wetlands and marshes restoration. "We can't overstate how important these restoration projects are to both the environment and economy of California," said Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Robert Perciasepe. "Along with this money and the continued support of our stakeholders, we're moving towards a healthy ecosystem in the Delta."

The remainder will go to projects such as installing fish screens to keep endangered fish from being pumped out of rivers; preventing introduction of exotic species that are accidentally released into the wild; water quality monitoring and research; educating farmers on how to improve farming practices to lessen reliance on pesticides, as well as research on endangered species such as delta smelt.

"CALFED's goal is to address California's long-term water needs. Proposition 204 provided real money to cure real problems regarding the environment, water quality, and water reliability for all regions of California. These first expenditures on environmental problems are a great start," said Senator Jim Costa (D-Fresno). "Further steps must also be taken and everyone involved must be dedicated to working together," he added. Senator Costa authored Senate Bill 900, which went on the ballot as Proposition 204.

CALFED Agencies More...more...more...

California The Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Water Resources
California Environmental Protection Agency
State Water Resources Control Board

Federal Environmental Protection Agency
Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Department of Commerce
National Marine Fisheries Service

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More than 330 proposals were submitted in response to a request for proposals issued by the CALFED Bay-Delta Program (CALFED) last summer. CALFED's mission is to develop a long-term comprehensive plan that will restore ecological health and improve water management for beneficial uses of the Bay-Delta system.

Ongoing ecosystem restoration work, begun under the 1994 Bay-Delta Accord, will provide important environmental benefits in the Bay-Delta estuary while the comprehensive solution is developed. A draft preferred solution will be released by CALFED in early February 1998.

Project Purpose: In the meantime, the purpose of the projects is to improve the health of the Bay-Delta ecosystem. Project proposals were solicited for actions which address non-flow related factors that negatively impact the Bay-Delta ecosystem, such as unscreened diversions, loss of habitat, water quality problems, adverse effects of fish and wildlife harvest and other factors which are recognized to be impacting aquatic and terrestrial species and habitats. Programs and projects were funded that begin to reduce conflicts in the Bay-Delta ecosystem; focus on high risk species and habitats, and provide broad ecosystem benefits.

Project Evaluation: CALFED established a two step process to evaluate and select the 1997 Category III proposals. In addition, public input was obtained via the Bay Delta Advisory Committee, with representatives jointly selected by Gov. Wilson and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. Thirteen technical review panels, organized by subject, scored and evaluated each of the 332 proposals. The evaluation sheets were passed on to the Integration Panel, comprised of state, federal, and non-agency representatives, whose task was to select the highest priority proposals based on the benefits to the priority species and habitats. Targeted species include anadromous fish, delta native fish and migratory birds.

Funding: The December 15, 1994 Bay-Delta Accord included a commitment to develop and fund non-flow related ecosystem restoration activities to improve the health of the Bay-Delta ecosystem. This funding source and commitment is commonly referred to as Category III. The passage of Proposition 204 in 1996 provided for an additional \$60 million from state bond funds for Category III. Additional funding has been received from stakeholders.

What's next for ecosystem restoration: The CALFED Bay-Delta Program will release for public review and comment a draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement in early February 1998 identifying a potential solution to environmental and water management problems associated with the Bay-Delta system. In addition to ecosystem restoration, the draft Programmatic EIR/EIS will
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address water use efficiency, water quality, levee system integrity and various ways to store and convey water through the Bay-Delta system.

It is anticipated that the next funding cycle for ecosystem restoration will identify actions in early 1998 using \$85 million in state and federal funds. A portion of the funds is expected to be allocated through grants with a grant announcement in early 1998.

About CALFED: The CALFED Bay-Delta Program was initiated in 1995 by Gov. Wilson and the Clinton Administration to address the environmental and water management issues associated with the Bay-Delta system, an intricate web of waterways created at the junction of the San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers. The Bay-Delta system is a critically important part of California's natural environment. It supplies drinking water for more than 22 million Californians, irrigation water for more than four million acres of the world's most productive farmland, and supports 120 fish and wildlife species, some found nowhere else on the planet.

For the past several decades, the Bay-Delta System has struggled to meet the competing demands of the environment and water users, while maintaining good water quality and a levee system that protects local towns and infrastructures from flooding. Today the system is not adequately meeting any of these needs.

CALFED is made up of technical experts from various state and federal agencies, and given direction by the policy leadership of those agencies, as well as a federally chartered public advisory committee. In addition, interested constituencies and the general public have participated in numerous technical and public workshops since the Program got underway in early 1995.

For further information about the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, call (916) 657-2666 or visit its website, <http://calfed.ca.gov>. For upcoming meetings and general information, call (800) 700-5752. To receive CALFED information and newsletters, write to CALFED at 1416 9th Street, #1155, Sacramento, CA 95814 and request to be placed on the mailing list.

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NOTE TO REPORTERS: Attached is a listing of the projects selected for funding.